

Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal, Tracks & Shed  
800 N. Alameda Street  
Los Angeles  
Los Angeles County  
California

HABS No. CA-2158-A

HABS  
CAL,  
19-LOSAN,  
64-A-

PHOTOCRAPHS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Addendum to  
Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal, Tracks and Shed  
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PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Western Region  
Department of the Interior  
San Francisco, California 94102

Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal  
(Union Station)  
HABS No. CA-2158 -A

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## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### Addendum to LOS ANGELES UNION PASSENGER TERMINAL (Union Station)

**Location:** 800 North Alameda Street, Los Angeles, Los Angeles County,  
California 90012

**Present Owner:** Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal  
Corporation

**Present Occupant:** Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal  
Corporation

**Present Use:** Train Concourse, Passenger Tunnel,  
Arrival Lobby, Reception Hall, and Exit Hall of Railroad  
Station

**Significance:** Union Station has been designated Los Angeles Cultural History Landmark No. 101. In 1980, it was entered on the National Register of Historic Places. The statement of significance from the National Register nomination reads:

The Los Angeles Union Station is a very handsome landmark that is a milestone in architectural history and in the history of transportation in America. Although less than 50 years of age, the property is of exceptional importance. Built when railroad passenger service was on the decline, it was the last of the great passenger terminals to be built in a monumental scale in a major American city. Because of this, plus its impressive appearance, it has been called "The Grand Finale of the Golden Age of Railroads in America." It combined three major railroad systems into one terminal in the heart of the city, using a stub-end track arrangement. Architecturally, the building is one of the finest expressions of the 1930s styling in this country. It skillfully combines Streamline Moderne with Spanish Colonial Revival to create an expression which is two-fold: the sleek, streamlined transportation imagery of the Moderne, highly appropriate to a center of railroad transportation, and the historical imagery of Spanish revival architecture, a major element of the Southern California cultural landscape. Integrity is almost totally intact, with original decoration, ornamentation, fixtures and furnishings still in place. Architecturally, it remains one of the great examples of its type and period in this country [National Register documentation, 1978-80].

This addendum covers only the train concourse, passenger tunnel, arrival lobby, reception hall, and exit arcade sections of Union Station. Structurally, these sections are part of the Baggage and Express Unit, situated at the rear of the main concourse.

The plan of the entire terminal was considered to be unusual at the time it was constructed because the site required that the "head house" be placed alongside the tracks

instead of at the end of the platform tracks, a more traditional layout. As a result, the station had to be a two-level plan "with the tracks at a sufficient elevation above the station floor to permit a passenger subway under the tracks" [*Railway Age* (RA), Jan. 1937:143; see also Bradley, 1979:72 and National Register documentation, 1978-80].

Another feature of the overall plan considered to be unusual at the time was the placement of the baggage and express unit between the track layout and the main station building [RA, Jan. 1937:143]. Separation of the passenger departure and arrival areas enabled foot traffic to move freely [*Architectural Record* (AR), Jan. 1941:134].

The decade of the 1940s was, by various accounts, Union Station's glory decade, in large part because the station was used as a principal terminal for moving troops to and from the Pacific Theater during World War II. Through the later war years, as many as 100 trains, including troop trains, arrived and departed from Union Station every 24 hours, a two-thirds increase over the normal 60 trains a day [NR documentation, 1978-80; Justice, 1977]. Historic photographs of views shot during these years show the train concourse full to overflowing with servicemen [Bradley, 1979:22; also see photographs 41 and 42]. Wartime fatalities also were returned stateside via Union Station; as many as 20 bodies per day reportedly came through the baggage department. In addition, during the late 1940s and early 1950s, many wartime refugees entered Los Angeles through Union Station [Justice, 1977].

For further information, see photo and written documentation for HABS No. CA-2158A, 2158B, 2158C, and 2158D.

## I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

**Construction Dates:** Tunnel 1935-1937 [*Southwest Builder and Contractor* (SWBC), Apr. 1939:np; RA, May 1937:772; Bradley, 1979:78]  
Baggage and Express Building 1936-39 [see original documentation]

**Architects:** All of the terminal buildings were planned and designed by an architectural committee consisting of the architects of the three railroad companies: H.L. Gilman (chairman) of the Santa Fe, J.H. Christie of the Southern Pacific, and R.J. Wirth of the Union Pacific, with the firm of John Parkinson and Donald B. Parkinson as consulting architects. John Parkinson, the senior member of the firm participated in the preliminary architectural activities but did not live to see the project completed. His son, Donald, carried on for the firm [SWBC, Apr. 1939:np; RA, Jan. 1937:144]. Herman Sachs was the color consultant, and Tommy Tomson was the landscape architect [Gebhard and Winter, 1985:242].

See original documentation for more information on John and Donald B. Parkinson.

**Engineers:** The engineering committee comprised M.C. Blanchard (chairman), Chief Engineer of Santa Fe; W.H. Kirkbride, Chief Engineer of Southern Pacific; and H.C. Mann, Chief Engineer of Union Pacific [RA, Jan. 1937:144].

All of the terminal buildings were designed and constructed in conformance with Los Angeles city building codes covering earthquake-proof construction. In general, these codes required subdividing structures into independent, self-supporting units of limited horizontal dimensions. The baggage and mail handling building is of reinforced concrete construction, and the passenger tunnel is a reinforced concrete rigid-frame structure [RA, Jan. 1937:144].

**Construction Engineer:** A.J. Barclay representing the Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal Company, with S.V. Meigs as assistant [SWBC, Apr. 1939:np; RA, Jan 1937:145].

**Original and Subsequent Owners:** Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal Corporation.

**Builder:** Robert E. McKee, General Contractor. McKee was awarded a contract in April 1937 which included all the buildings in the station group and covered all work in connection with their construction except for 1) the concrete pile foundations, which were driven by the Raymond Concrete Pile Company under a separate contract with the Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal Corporation; 2) the structural steel, a separate contract awarded to Consolidated Steel Corporation; 3) plumbing, a separate contract awarded to F.D. Reed Plumbing Company; 4) electrical work, a separate contract awarded to Chandler Electric Company; and 5) air conditioning, ventilation, and structural sheet metal work, a separate contract awarded to H.S. McClelland [SWBC, Apr. 1939:np; RA, May 1937:772].

**Contractor's Superintendent:** C.C. Wright of the Los Angeles Office of Robert E. McKee [SWBC, Apr. 1939:np].

**Construction Subcontractors:** [The first three subcontractors are the most pertinent to note for the part of the station covered in the photo and written documentation of this addendum, but additional subcontractors are listed here since they do not appear in the original documentation or in the first addendum. All information comes from SWBC, Apr. 1939:np.]

Valencia Spanish Tile Corporation: cement tile

Gladding, McBean & Co.: glazed ceramic tile fabricator. Installation by The Trade and Import Company.

The Trade and Import Company: marble and tile work. The Trade and Import Company comprised four local contracting firms: Musto-Keenan Company, B.V. Collins, Hilgartner Company, and L.A. Marble & Tile Co. The entire station required 75,000 sq. ft. of marble and tile.

Uhrich Millwork, Ltd.: millwork

General Fixture Company: railings and other fixtures

A.J. Bayer Company: baggage counter

Kennear Manufacturing Company: rolling doors

Herzog Iron Works, Inc.: ornamental iron

E.E. Schwenk: plastering

Harry Wasserman: painting

E.F. Hauserman Company: office partitions

Sanymetal Products Company: metal partitions

Havstad Linoleum & Carpet Co.: linoleum

B.L. Wilcox Company: skylights

National Venetian Blind Company: Venetian blinds

Soule Steel Company: steel windows and screens

Raphael Glass Company: glass and glazing

California Fire Proof Door Company: fire proof doors

Eugene Meloeny Company: roofing and waterproofing

**Original Plans and Construction:** Construction of Union Station cost approximately eleven million dollars [CA Historic Resources Inventory, 1976]. See photographs 45-50

for elevations, original floor plan, longitudinal cross section showing the location of the passenger tunnel relative to the station, the overall cement floor tile pattern and color scheme, and details of the train gate doors and counters.

**Alterations:** Portions of the train concourse and the arrival lobby on the north end have been partitioned to create the Amtrak Station Services office. This alteration encloses the northernmost passenger gate to the tunnel [see photographs 4-6, 41]. No permit for this alteration was located, but it most likely occurred after the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) took over station operations in 1971.

The southeast corner of the reception hall has been partitioned to create the Amtrak Transportation Department office [see photographs 23-25]. This alteration also probably dates to the early 1970s.

The original Art Deco signboards listing train arrival and departure times now house television monitors, and one of the original doors between the train concourse and reception hall has been replaced with a modern sliding door [see photographs 7-12, 44].

Part of the Exit Hall has been enclosed for station offices. No date for this alteration has been located [see photographs 29-31].

**Historical Context:** The dominant Spanish Colonial Revival style of Union Station was a deliberate attempt to reflect Los Angeles' Spanish-Mexican origins and to coordinate the appearance of this massive structure with El Pueblo de Los Angeles located across Alameda Street to the west. The original pueblo extended to the site of Union Station, and later the city's original Chinatown was located here. Construction of the station culminated 30 years of legal negotiations to unify passenger rail service in downtown Los Angeles, hence the name Union Station.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

**General Statement:** The architectural integrity of Union Station's train concourse, passenger tunnel, arrival lobby, reception hall, and exit arcade (the sections of the station covered in this addendum) remain substantially intact. Portions of the train concourse, reception hall, and exit hall have been partitioned off to enclose newer offices, but the original fabric remains in good to very good condition. The decorative elements found in these back sections of the station complement those of the main waiting room, vestibule, and main concourse, but the floor and wainscot tiles have their own distinctive patterns and colors which serve both to set this area apart from the main building and, at the same time, unify the sprawling mass of the baggage and express unit.

**Description of Exterior:** See original documentation. This recordation covers only to the interior details of the train concourse, arrival lobby, reception hall, and portions of the passenger tunnel and exit arcade.

### Description of Interior:

1. **Floor Plan:** The train concourse, located at the east end of the waiting room, occupies the ground floor of the two- and three-story baggage and express unit on a level with the main floors of all the station buildings. Train gates located on the east wall of the concourse direct departing passengers through the departure-arrival lobby and into the passenger tunnel, which continues eastward underground to the track area. Two doors on the south wall of the train concourse open to a one-story reception hall, from which arriving passengers may leave through two exit areas: one an arcaded loggia which opens to the south garden patio and the other a covered exit arcade along the south side of the garden patio. The exit arcade is now also used as the Amtrak bus waiting area. Various station offices are located on the south side of the arrival lobby and reception hall.

See the map key to the Photograph Index on page 17 for a general view of the overall floor plan of this portion of the station.

2. **Decorative features including floors and walls:** Although the decorative elements are not as grand as those found in the vestibule, main concourse, and waiting room, the station's back area nonetheless has its own friendly mix of Art Deco and Southwest Indian motifs, melded by the geometric designs that are common to both.

Floors in the concourse, lobby, and reception are covered with cement tile of deep earth tones arranged in flowing geometric patterns. Notes on the original plan of the floor design for Section III of the station, which includes the train concourse, arrival lobby, and reception hall, indicate that Herman Sachs, the color consultant, scrutinized sample color tiles carefully [see photograph 49]. A total of nine colors appear in the floor: three shades of brown, ranging from a yellowish tan to a gray-brown; a light and dark desert red; two shades of gray (the lighter gray is used very sparingly); and two shades of black. Color keys appearing on pages 18 and 19 respectively identify the floor color scheme as it appears in photographs 19 and 34. The keys reference both the Munsell and Pantone color systems.

The floor of the exit hall is paved with brick parquetry, which further emphasizes the geometric patterns of this building [see photograph 33]. Brick parquetry continues through the garden patio walkways.

Wainscot tile on the walls and structural columns is a fine, painted and glazed pottery tile (faience tile) in muted colors, arranged in geometric designs. Gladding, McBean & Co. fabricated the faience tile [SWBC, Apr. 1939]. Nine colors appear in the tile patterns: bright blue, aquamarine, ocher, pale yellow-green, brick orange, pinkish-brown, tan, white, and black. Color keys appearing on pages 20 and 21 respectively identify the tile color schemes of the walls and columns as they are shown in photographs 20 and 21.

Lighting is diffused through glass ceiling panels, some of them ribbon panels, some individual rectangular panels [see photograph 32 for detail of ribbon panels]. The modern appearance of these lighting panels is deceptive; building plans and historic photographs reveal that these are the original fixtures.



The shaft of each structural column flares at the top to an elongated octagonal capital. The ceiling is covered with the original acoustic board. Original Art Deco signage is of bronze [see photographs 36 and 37].

Site: See original documentation.

### PART III. SOURCES

#### Literature:

Bradley, Bill. *The Last of the Great Railroad Stations*. Glendale, CA: Interurban Press, 1979.

California, State of. Department of Parks and Recreation. Historic Resources Inventory documentation on Union Station prepared by Dennis Smith and Tom Sitton, September 1976.

"Construction" column. *Railway Age* 102 (May 1, 1937):772.

Gebhard, David and Robert Winter. *Architecture in Los Angeles: A Compleat Guide*. Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1985.

Justice, Bobbie. "L.A. Union Station Conjures a Trainload of Memories." *Los Angeles Times*, August 28, 1977.

"Los Angeles Union Passenger Station Is Beautiful Architectural Creation." *Southwest Builder and Contractor* 93 (April 28, 1939):n.p.

"Los Angeles Soon to Have New Union Station." *Railway Age* 102 (January 16, 1937):142-145.

National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. Prepared by Ruben Lovret, Los Angeles City Planning Department, 1979-1980.

"Railroad Stations." *Architectural Record* 89 (January 1941):133-135.

#### Photographs:

Although historic photographs of the baggage and express unit are relatively scarce, and those sources which contributed views are so noted in the photograph index, there are several archival and personal collections in the greater Los Angeles area and Omaha, Nebraska, which contain photographs of Union Station. Sources consulted in the course of preparing this addendum include:

Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Merrick Library.

Bison Archives. Mark Wannamaker.

California Historical Society, Southern California Chapter. Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce Photo Collection; Title Insurance and Trust Photo Collection.

California Museum of Photography, Riverside. Keystone-Mast Photograph Collection.

California State University, Long Beach, Special Collections. Whittington Photograph Collection.

Interurban Press. Bill Bradley, author of *The Last of the Great Railroad Stations*.

Los Angeles Central Library. Security Pacific Photograph Collection.

Schulman, Julius. Los Angeles area photographer.

Seaver Center for Western History Research, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. Ephemera collections.

UCLA University Research Library, Special Collections. Daily News Photograph Morgue; Los Angeles Times Photograph Morgue; ephemera collections.

Union Pacific Museum and Archives, Omaha, Nebraska.

University of Southern California, Doheny Library, Television and Cinema Archives.

University of Southern California, East Library, Regional Cultural History Collection. Los Angeles Herald Examiner Photograph Morgue; ephemera collections.

Warner Pictures Archives.

#### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This addendum to the Historic American Buildings Survey documentation for Union Station has been prepared as mitigative recording prior to making interior alterations to the train concourse, arrival lobby, reception hall, passenger tunnel, and exit arcade. The project entails converting a portion of the arrival lobby and train concourse into an entrance into the Metro Rail station, and converting part of the arrival lobby, reception hall, and boiler room into a ticketing and baggage handling facility. The baggage handling facility will move baggage between floors by conveyor belt and deliver baggage to passengers from carousels similar to those used at modern airports. Crew base facilities will move from the north side of the train concourse and the reception hall area to the south side. These alterations will make room for placement of the Los Angeles Rail Rapid Transit (Metro Rail) into Union Station. It also will consolidate and improve the ticketing, baggage, and crew base functions of Union Station.

The Project Manager for the Southern California Rapid Transit District HABS recordation of the Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal was James Sowell, Senior Planner of the Rail Facilities Division. The firm of Greenwood and Associates of Pacific Palisades, led by Roberta Greenwood, was the Project Archaeologist for the Metro Rail Project.

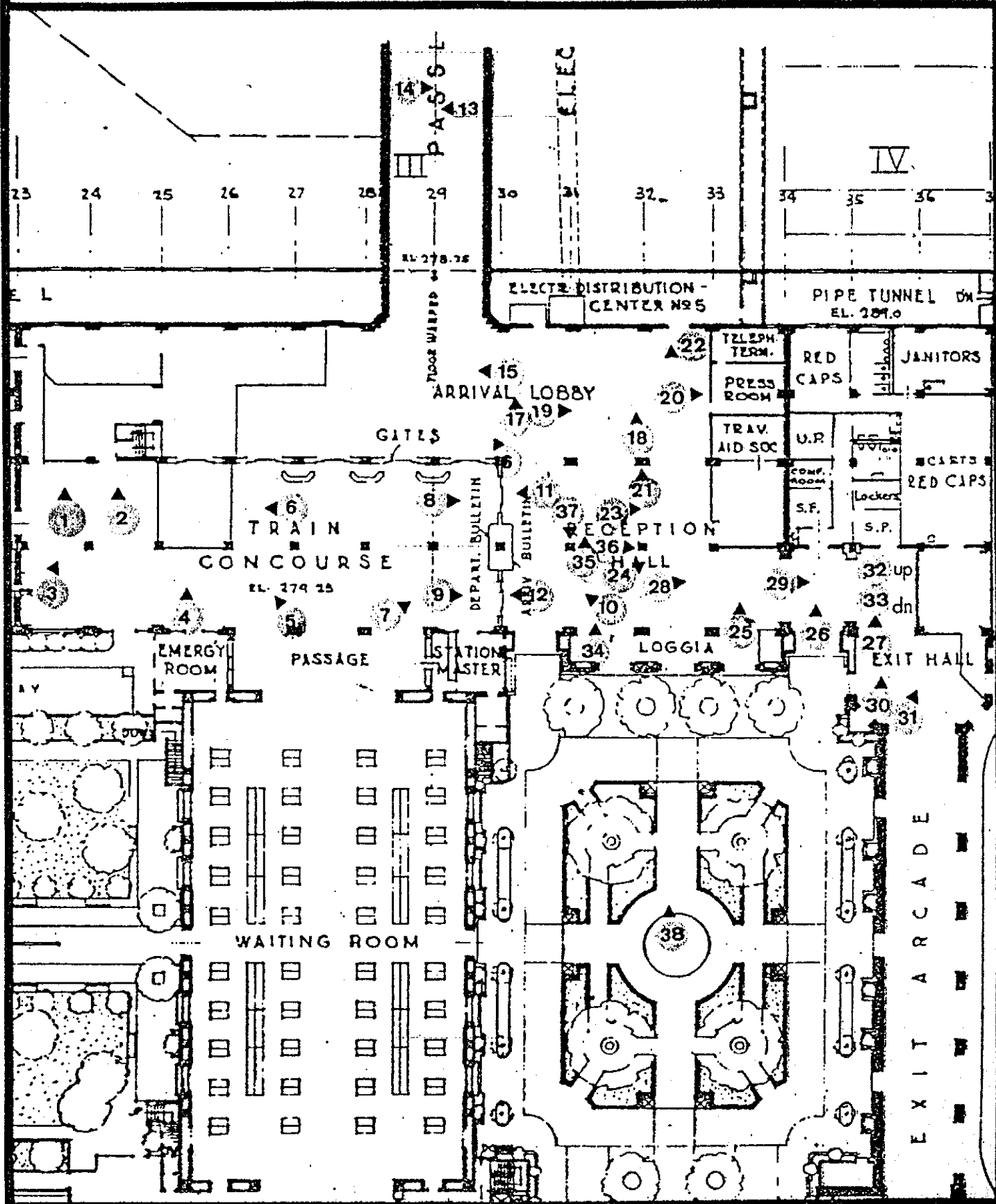
Under contract to Greenwood and Associates, PHR Associates prepared the photo and written documentation of this addendum. Robert L. Pfister, Superintendent of the Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal, cooperated with the photo documentation. Mark A. Bookspan and Everett Weinreb shot the photographs, assisted by Marilyn Ziemer. Everett Weinreb was additionally responsible for photo copy work. Doug Nickles, Shelley Bookspan, Jamie Calhoun, and Paula Carr, all of PHR Associates, assisted with the research. Jamie Calhoun also assisted with preparation of the color keys and graphics.

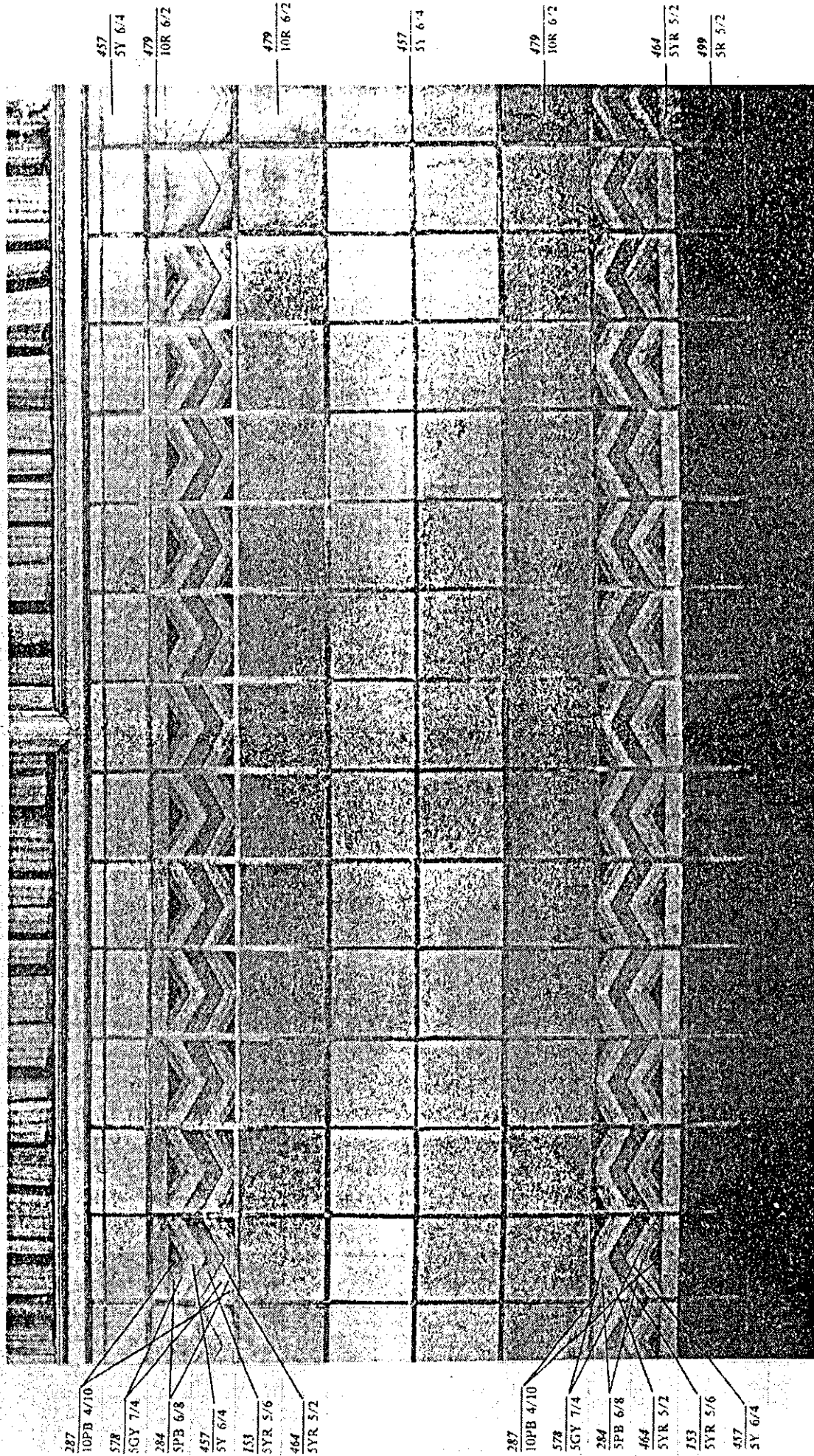
Funding for this report was provided by grants to the Southern California Rapid Transit District from the United States Department of Transportation, the State of California, and the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission.

Prepared by: Rebecca Conard  
Title: Senior Historian and Partner  
Affiliation: PHR Associates, Santa Barbara  
Date: November 1988

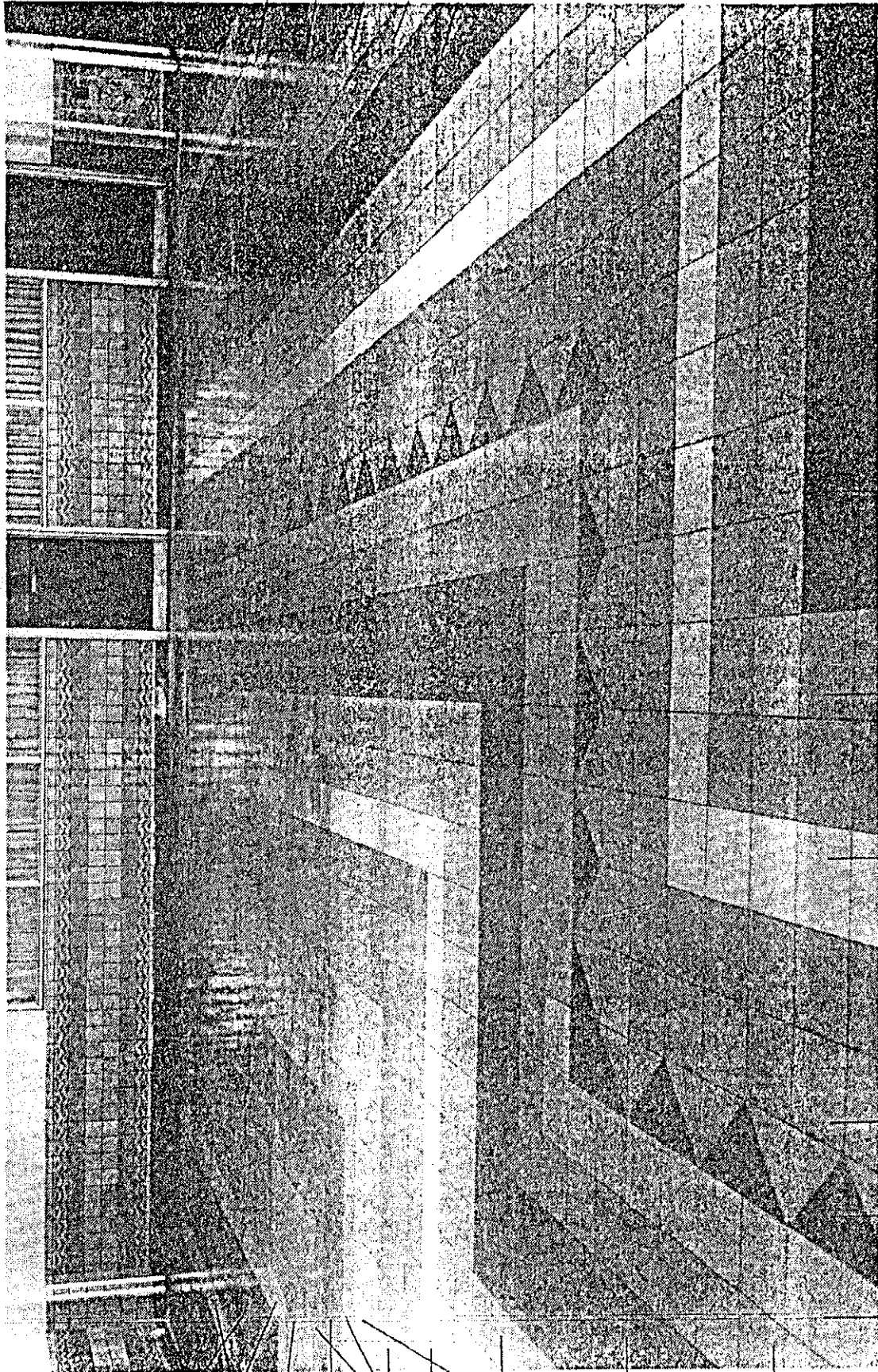
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PHOTOGRAPH KEY





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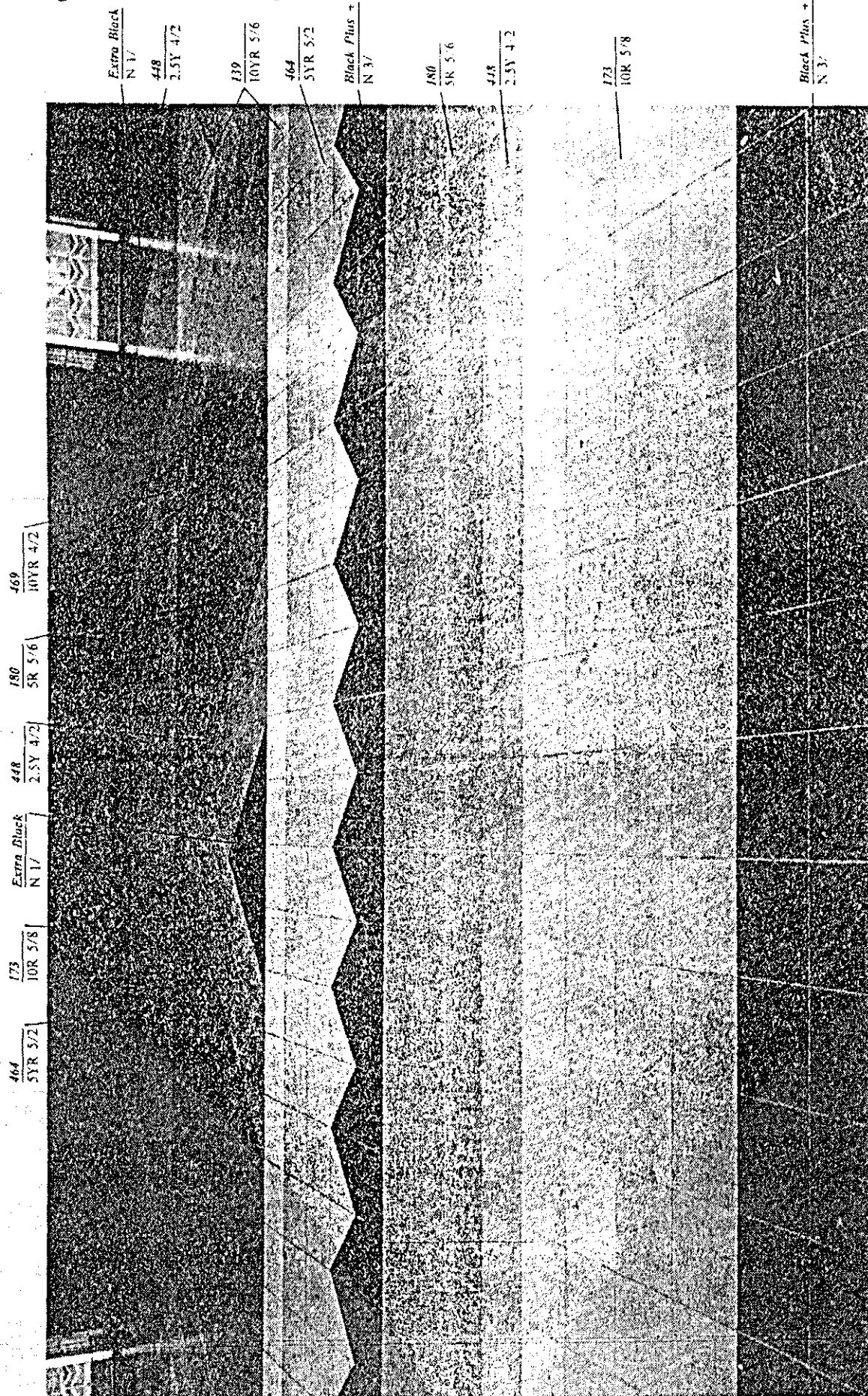
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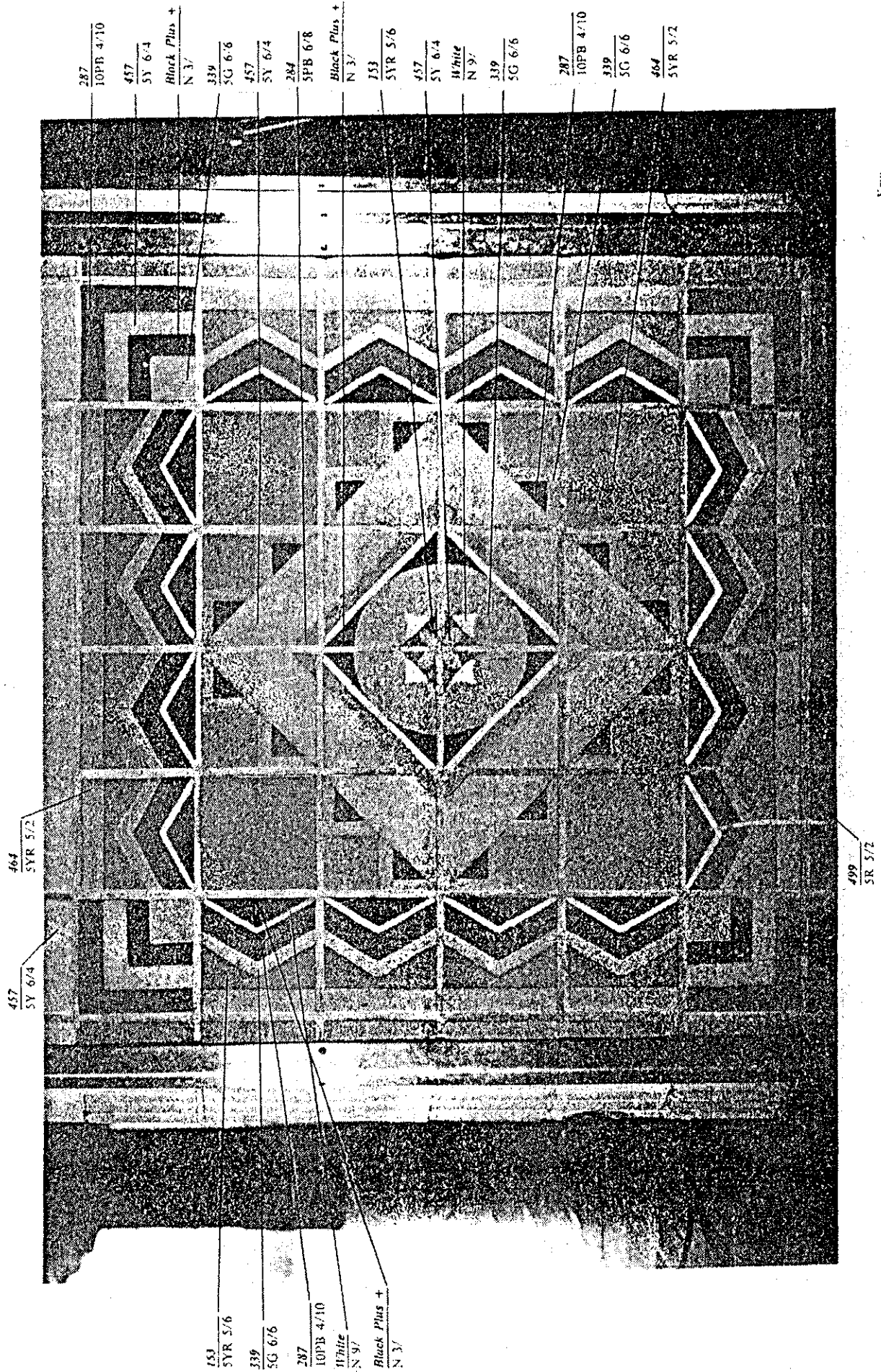
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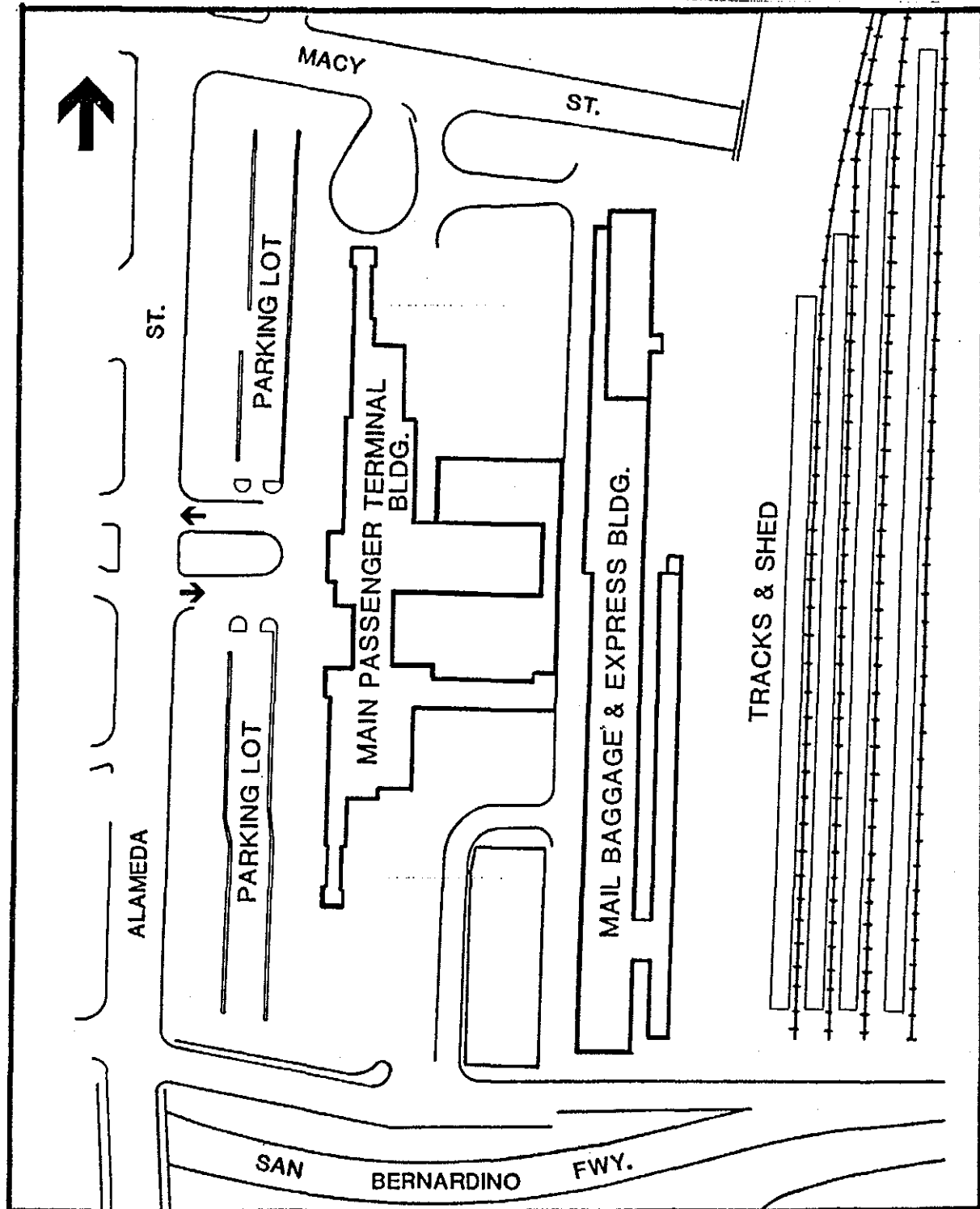




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